# Field/Trip Report

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**Name/s of traveler/s**: Aberra Adie and Melkamu Bezabih

**Dates and place of travel: 19 – 22 Feb 2014** – Lemo Africa RISING Site

**Purpose/objective of the travel:**

         Observe and evaluate the growth of the fodder crops and how the farmers are managing

         Assess the local feed resources for the fattening, existing sheep housing and feeding practices, and preparations needed for the pilot project.

         Assess the sheep market information and preferences for fattened sheep

         Collect planting materials/cuttings of elephant and Desho grasses from Areka research institute to plant them in the backyards of participating farmers

**Key people contacted (contact details):**

1. Ato Workneh Dubale, Africa RISING Lemo site coordinator
2. Ato Lobe Haile, Lemo woreda Office of Agriculture , Livestock feed expert
3. Ato Tamirat, Lemo woreda Office of Agriculture, Cop expert
4. Ato Birhanu Erwaro, Lemo woreda Irrigation expert
5. At Nigussie Kifle, Hangacha woreda Office of Agriculture, Livestock office head
6. DAs and Farmers at Upper Gana, Jawe and Karakicho (Hangacha)

**Discussion/observation/insights:**

1. **Observe and evaluate the growth of the fodder crops and how the farmers are managing**

All the Oats/vetch plots planted on Feb 6 and 7, 2014 in 14 farmers’ fields at Jawe, Upper Gana and Karakicho have germinated effectively. Some farmers started early weeding of the plots. The germinated Oats at the farm of Tadege Kobe, Upper Gana has been grazed by sheep. Tadege’s fence was loose and he has been informed to reinforce it so that new shootings may emerge from the remaining stems. All the farmers seem to be happy with the germination of the planted fodder and are adequately irrigating the plots. The fencing and general management of the plots seems to be stronger at Hangacha than Lemo owing to their past experience with irrigated crops management.

Most of the farmers both at Lemo amd Hangacha are already planting vegetable seeds on nurseries to be transplanted to the nearby irrigated plots. We observed some gaps in the delivery of improved vegetable seeds to the farmers. The woreda irrigation office is in charge of facilitating the delivery. Ato Birhanu Erwaro, the Lemo woreda irrigation expert who visited the situation with us promised to fill the gap as soon as possible.

Farmers in Jawe and Upper Gana were observed to still use the traditional rope and bucket lifting system to pull water while they have the treadle and hip pumps at their homes. However, the farmers at Karakicho, Hangacha are using their rope and washer pumps effectively.

**2**. **Assess the local feed resources for the fattening, existing sheep housing and feeding practices, and preparations needed for the pilot project.**

Most farmers have wheat straw, some have small amount of teff straw and barley straw as basal feed for their livestock during dry period. All farmers use Ensete leaves and root (Hamicho) to feed to livestock when they finish the straws. We advised them to mix the straws with Ensete leaves instead of feeding each alone. Mixing legume residues with that of cereal is not a common practice in both Lemo and Hangacha. Few farmers have few stands of improved forages like Sesbania, Napier and Desho at their back yards. Some farmers have Sugar cane plantation and use the tops for livestock feeding. Only few cases of Tree Lucerne trees observed at the back yard of few farmers. At Hangacha, we observed farmers feeding sorghum leaves to livestock and use sorghum stover (stem) for fencing. Bamboo trees grow in some patches and farmers said they feed the tips (leaves) to their livestock.

Most farmers have a separate house for livestock shelter during the nights. However, at least one of the family members needs to stay in the room guarding the animals during the night. Sheep, goats, cattle and equines are sheltered in the same room. The animals are fed in group on an open floor in front of them even if they are penned individually. There is a lot of wastage of the feed because of absence of a proper feeding trough. We feel that this could be one possible element of the intervention package.

3. **Assess the sheep market information and preferences for fattened sheep**

Farmers were asked about the market preference of sheep and their own experience with sheep rearing and marketing. They informed that sheep from Doyogana area which are known as Doyogana (Adilo) are preferred most by the market. Castrated mature sheep are preferred over un-castrated rams. Some farmers tell that they grow and fatten sheep for about 6-7 months until they reach heavy weight of about 35-40 Kg.

We visited Doyogana sheep market on Friday, which is the main market day in Doyogana. There is plenty of fattened local Doyogana (Adilo) sheep which can weigh 35 -40 Kg in the market and can be sold up to Birr 2500-3000. One can buy un-fattened mature sheep for about Birr 1300 -1500, fatten for about 2 months and sell it for Birr 2500-3000.

We also met Ato Mulatu, an employee of Areka research station at Doyogana who works as community based sheep breeding program agent. Mulatu told us the local sheep breeding program which aims at improving sheep performance through local breed up-grading with communities. He told us about the possibilities of liaising with Areka research center and the community to source sheep for fattening by Lemo and Hangacha woredas. Community - to - community dialogues need to be facilitated by Areka research center and Africa RISING.

4. **Collect planting materials/cuttings of Napier and Desho grasses from Areka research institute to plant them in the backyards of participating farmers**

Farmers at each Kebele have been asked if they want to plant some Napier and Desho grasses in the peripheries of their plots as a perennial stand. Most farmers expressed their willingness to plant, one farmer resisted to plant Napier as he perceives Napier as drying out the soil. His view has been well appreciated and he was exempted from planting Napier. Areka research center has kindly provided (for free; we paid only incentives to the laborers who prepared the materials) more than 1300 cuttings of Napier grass and 1000 splits of Desho grass to be planted at the backyards of Lemo and Hangacha farmers. The materials have been distributed to the interested farmers through the DAs at each Kebele. Sample farmers and DAs were shown the planting methods.

Ato Lobe, the Livestock feed expert from Lemo woreda Office of Agriculture mentioned that there are kebeles like Shacha Oroma in the woreda with better experiences of forage development and dairy farming. He informed us that the NGO called “VOCA Ethiopia” has been working in these sites in the last couple of years and facilitated establishment of a forage nursery site. The forage nursery site is currently run by a women-group. According to Ato Lebo, the women-group sell forage seedlings to the surrounding farmers as a source of income, in addition to the small scale dairy production they are engaged in. We noted that we can use this nursery site as a source of planting materials and as place for experience sharing on local forage nursery management. Ato Lobe invited the Africa RISING team to visit the sites sometime in the future, and we planned to do it in our next field trip.

**Key decisions and outcome/s:**

* Sheep acquisition process and sheep management training including feeds and feeding systems has to commence soon before the forage is due to harvest
* Lemo/Hangacha farmers have to make linkages with Doyogana farmers association for sheep acquisition and experience sharing about sheep fattening and marketing

**A way forward/ recommendations/suggestions (if any ):** Key suggestions that came out from the discussion include the following:

1. Finalize research protocol and research agreements with partners
2. Hold focused group discussions with farmers at Jawe, Upper Gana and Karakicho (Hangacha)
3. Draft and discuss sheep acquisition agreements with the farmers and discuss and implement community – to – community dialogues between Doyogana sheep grower associations and the farmers in Lemo and Hangacha

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| **Case story:** *Was there anything that struck you as really interesting during the trip? If so, you are encouraged to briefly describe it here (with pictures if possible) so that we can share these insights with the rest of the Africa RISING team and beyond.*  Doyogana (Adilo) sheep, a local breed with an attractive body conformation has a good market attraction locally. It can weigh up to 40 Kg if fattened well. It is good to capitalize on what we have before introducing more.  C:\Users\aadie\Desktop\IMG_1104.JPG  Figure : Fattened Doyogana sheep in a market day at Doyogana  C:\Users\aadie\Desktop\IMG_1111.JPG  Figure : : Doyogana sheep market  C:\Users\aadie\Desktop\IMG_1136.JPG  Figure 3: Oats/Vetch establishment at backyard of a farmer at Hangacha  C:\Users\aadie\Desktop\IMG_1096.JPG  Figure : Napier and Desho grass transport from Areka research station |